

MILE END WEST PROJECT - C.D. TASK FORCE

GOALS:

To develop a sense of "community" among the residents of Mile End West, so through cooperation and united action they may alleviate the present social and economic conditions.

Through "action learning" enable the large immigrant population become more integrated and effective in the total society.

OBJECTIVES:

- 1.* Meet the citizens of the area and gain their confidence.

The fears, distrust and feelings of hopelessness of Mile End West citizens have been described and must be overcome if they are to solve their problems.

2. Assist citizens learn they can change the conditions affecting their lives. A climate must be created in which the citizens are aware that they have the same rights as all Canadians and can and should exercise them.

3. Assist the citizens learn how to solve problems. They must learn to define problems adequately, how to identify resources they possess or have access to, and how to bring these resources to bear on the problem. *

* p. 14, Mile End West Project 11/68

CONSTITUENCY:

Total population	40,385 *
Canadian born	52% *
Other	48% *

Average Income per family \$ 3,840 *

Average Income per head of family \$ 2,903 *

* 1961 Census.

In the years 1965,66,67, immigration to Mile End totalled 30,000. The largest percentage were Greeks, with Italians, Portuguese and Chinese being other significant groups.

Presently our main concentration has been with the Greek population the largest ethnic group and the one most in need of help.

In fact no Greek community exists as the population is completely divided and often alienated from each other. There are a few Greek organizations usually representing a geographical region at home and with the main purpose being to provide assistance for those who have not immigrated.

However, several incidents over the past two years have shown that there is an effective informal system of communication. Decision-making is not restricted to any particular group one of the weaknesses in the community being a lack of leadership. The church, upper and middle class Greeks in no way speak for the residents of Mile End.

APPROACH:

* Concept and Philosophy - At present, the terms "community" and "community development" are open to differing interpretations. Therefore, the sense in which they will be used in this proposal is as follows:

"Community, defined in its implicit elements, is any process of social interaction which gives rise to more intensive or extensive attitudes and practices of interdependence, cooperation, collaboration and unification. Community in this sense is not a place, it is a process by and through which people are learning to relate to one another in such a way that the capacity for cooperative, collaborative living is developing." (Edward E. Lindeman, Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, vol 4. p. 103.)

"Community development is the conscious effort to stimulate and facilitate the growth of individuals to mature interdependent relationships through action learning. The action may be through internal or external intervention into the life of the community. Community development is more than re-organization or re-alignment within the structure of a community. Community development involves changes in the lives of individuals, their attitudes, their fears, and their orientation to their environment. Through "learning by doing", the individual relates to others in identifying and defining community problems. A further step in the process is the development of cooperative relations with others, to utilize internal and external resources as they may be needed to gain more control over the environment." (Edgar Smee, National Council, Y.M.C.A.'s Toronto, Ontario).

The democratic state has provided channels whereby citizens may legally make known their dissatisfactions and desires for change. It is our intention to inform the citizens of Mile End West of these legal means and help them learn how to use them. However, it would be naive to believe that these channels at all times remain open. Vested interests and the threat of change can make it difficult for underprivileged citizens to express their concern and to be heard. In such instances, the power (the ability to control or bring about change) of a united front becomes a political reality with potential to bring pressure to bear in those hindering the democratic process.

The objective of this project is to gain the trust of the people, assist them in identifying problems, unite them so that they may plan solutions, and to provide support as they follow their plans through action. Much of this work will be done quietly in interviews,

meetings and planning sessions. Only when attempts to make use of the provided channels have been rebuffed, do we believe that overt action, such as demonstrations or mass publicity is valid.

It is our intention to help the residents of Mile End West learn that through planned change and responsible united action they may gain the power to bring about change in their environment and to gain the rights that have been denied them. Through "learning by doing", we believe the residents will gain a greater sense of "community" and so become more productive and active members of the total society.

The community development process involves not only social but also psychological change. For by learning to deal with problems through communicating and cooperating with others, the resident is exposed to others' view of life. Through participation and exposure, the adult is forced to deal with his fears and anxieties. While the changes in the adult may be minimal, the effect they have on his children can be of great value in enabling them to more readily adjust to the new society.*

* pp. 11 & 12 Mile End West Project 11/68

RATIONALE

* In 1965 the Montreal Y.M.C.A. began an intensive evaluation program, the results of which are to be the basis of guidelines and objectives for the coming decade. As a part of the overall process, the International branch conducted an evaluation of its on-going program, which together with surveys conducted by other agencies, formed the basis of the branch's Planning and Development Report.

This report indicates that the community served by the branch is grappling with the dual problems of poverty and cultural alienation. The extent of the socio-economic problem was far greater than had been anticipated and it became obvious that the only adult programs of real value were the English and French classes conducted by the language centre.

As a result of this study, it was recommended that a community development project be established in the area known as Mile End West. This area is defined by Pine Ave. in the south, C.P.R. tracks in the north, Hutchison in the west, and St. Dominique in the east. These barriers were chosen because they defined an area populated mainly by immigrants and which had not been served by similar projects conducted by the Company of Young Canadians, the Urban Social Re-development Project, or the Montreal Council of Social Agencies.

As of September 1967, one member of the staff spent one day each week, meeting with the people in the community and assisting them to identify their problems and concerns. From these efforts a need was identified and a proposal for a limited community development project was approved by the branch Board of Management. However, it became obvious that much more was really necessary and a more comprehensive proposal was drawn up and submitted to the local Board and the Metropolitan Y.M.C.A. Board of Directors.

In February, the Metropolitan Executive Committee approved the proposal and in March the Metropolitan Board of Directors approved both the principal and the type of work proposed and the solicitation of government funds. However, efforts to have the project financed were

unsuccessful, and the project has operated since May on small grants from the National Council of Y.M.C.A.'s and the Montreal Y.M.C.A. Although operating on a limited scale, the project has been effective but to accomplish its objectives, full financing is a necessity. *

* pp. 2 & 3 Mile End West Project 11/68